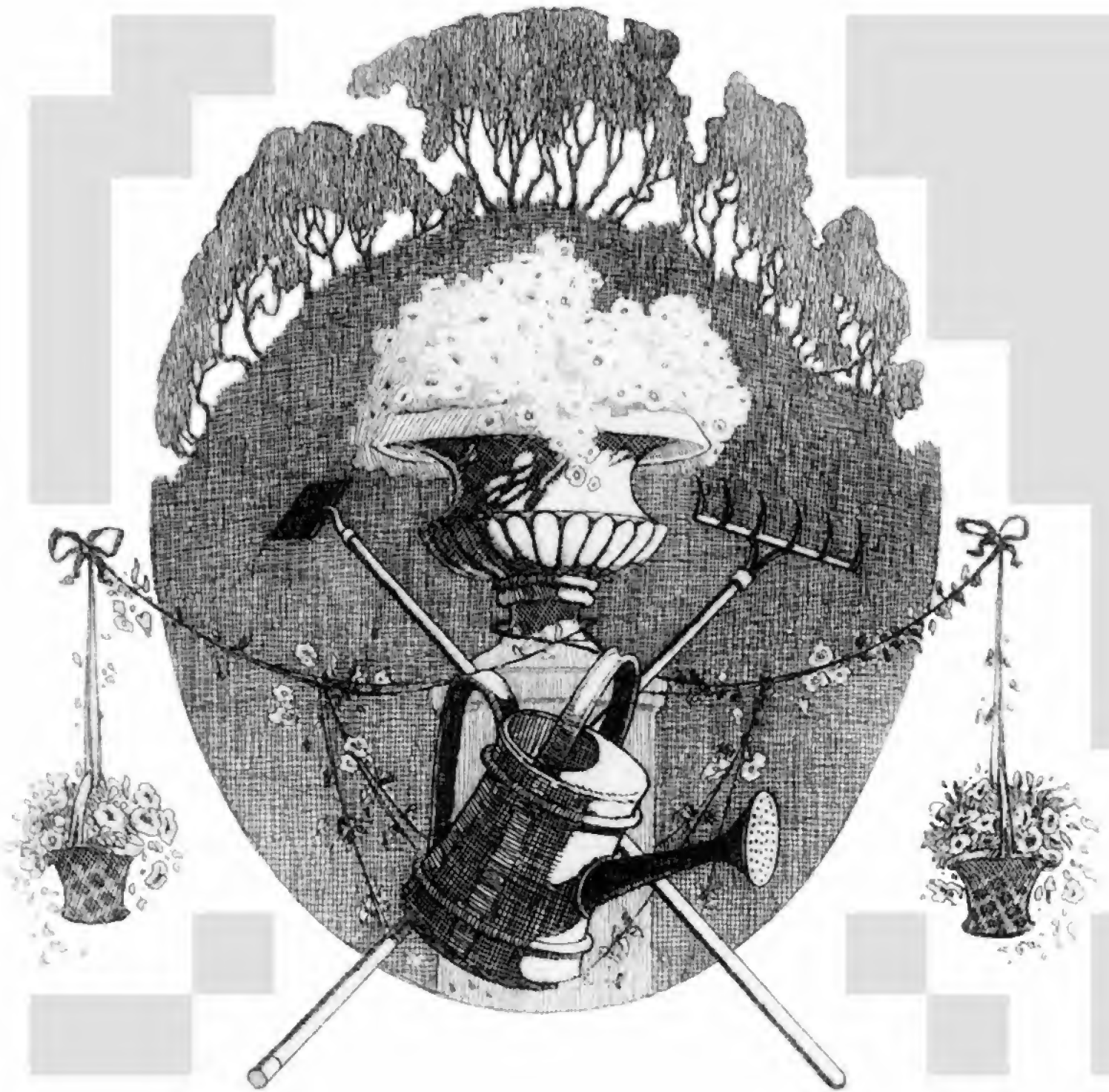


# Australian Garden HISTORY

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*Sketching regional garden histories*

JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY





Cover: Detail from a bookplate from a volume formerly owned by Mary White, of Saumarez Homestead outside Armidale, a perfect evocation of the rolling hills of New England.

Rare Book Collection, University of New England Library

Above: The lemon-scented gum avenue at Cruden Farm, a widely admired feature of a fondly regarded garden created by a much loved gardener, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, who has died at the age of 103 (see our reflections by Peter Watts—and by Dame Elisabeth herself—on page 20).

Photo: Simon Griffiths

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AUSTRALIAN  
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# A regional perspective for Australian garden history

Ruth Morgan

At the 14th Summer School of the Australian Institute of Political Science, held at Armidale, New South Wales, in January 1948, teacher and public servant Harold Harris outlined objectives for a post-war policy of decentralisation. The Commonwealth's aim was to promote vibrant, healthy, and prosperous communities outside the capital cities that would buttress the nation's economic development. Such foresight was essential, explained Harris (as he recalled an old Chinese proverb): 'If you are planning for a year plant grass; if you are planning for ten years plant trees; if you are planning for a hundred years plant men'.

This policy of decentralisation spoke to enduring rural traditions in an increasingly suburban nation. In decentralisation, Rev. John Moyes, Anglican Bishop of Armidale, saw both spiritual and ecological benefits, where nature would not be pushed 'out of human life as we do today in close-knit industrial areas'. The planning of the new settlements, Harris explained, would be according to 'natural regions', not only of topography, climate, and soil, but also of economic and social unity.

Taken together, these ideas of decentralisation and regionalism pointed towards the importance of people and place, of building communities with a keen sense of attachment to each other and to particular environments. This planning for people *in* place also reflected post-war popularisation of ecology as depicting a 'web of life'.

Many Australians had been introduced to ecological ideas through the rise of nature study, introduced into school curricula from the turn of the twentieth century. In *Botany for Australian Students* (1916), field naturalists Constance Le Plastrier and Agnes Brewster encouraged the study of Australian plants so that 'the local bush may become the laboratory of the pupils'.

Meanwhile, the emergence of ecology as a scientific discipline was underway in South Australia, where British-born Bentley Osborn had been appointed foundation professor of botany at the University of Adelaide in 1912. Osborn saw a role for the application of the developing field of ecology to the study of Australian vegetation, which led him to advocate the protection of arid regions against agricultural development.

The study of regions as integrated systems of soils, climate, and vegetation was deemed vital for the nation's primary industries and settlement policies. The classification of areas according to shared environmental characteristics and ecological relationships allowed for more sophisticated scientific comparison and contrast both within Australia and abroad, fostering the transfer of ideas and practices across land and sea. Scientists regularly conferred on ways to overcome ecological challenges to national development, such as soil erosion and biological pests.

Before the First World War, Sydney Botanic Gardens director Joseph Maiden had divided New South Wales into geographical zones to guide tree plantings. These divisions were based on geology, types of vegetation cover, rainfall, and climatic

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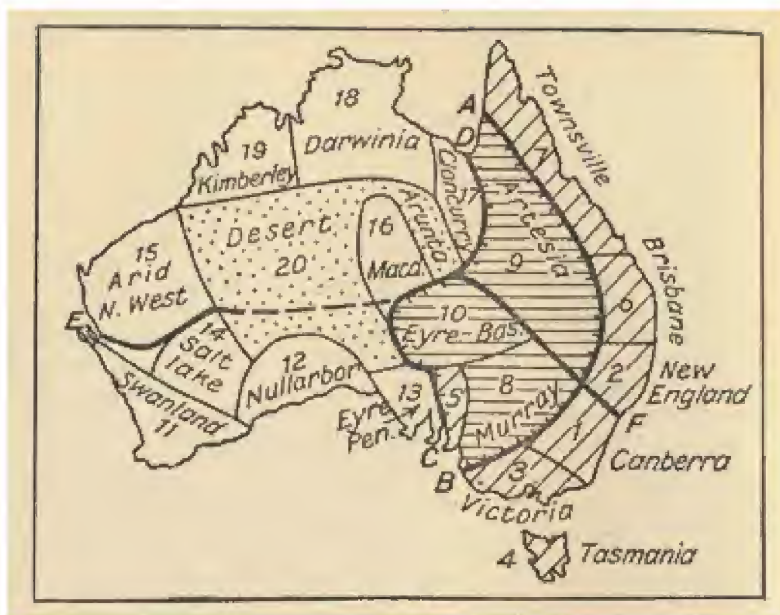
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In his book *Australia* (1940), explorer and geographer Griffith Taylor controversially identified the limits of white settlement based on the natural resources and climate of the continent as part of his regional approach.

variation. This approach had obvious benefits to Australian plant nurseries. In 1923, for instance, Hazlewood Brothers of Epping asked the Bureau of Meteorology to prepare a map of Australian climate zones to guide their purchasers where certain plants might—or might not—thrive. As the century progressed, gardening guides increasingly embraced this national approach in place of their former colonial/state-based focuses.

Between the wars, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research provided another dimension to regional understandings of Australia. Advances in soil science allowed for the identification of zones based on the relationships between soil, climate, and vegetation. Such an approach was logical for Australia, as leading soil scientist James A. Prescott explained in 1931: 'It is only in areas of continental size that the importance of the zonal system becomes at all obvious'.

These efforts to classify regions and zones according to ecological characteristics might be understood as part of a longer tradition of making sense of place. For Australians, the identification of regions commonly reflected the continent's extreme ecological diversity—

- A land of sweeping plains,
- Of ragged mountain ranges,
- Of droughts and flooding rains

as Dorothea Mackellar so memorably rhymed. Appreciating country in this way offers an alternative to the arbitrary and abstract political borders that divided the continent. Tasmania, for instance, was once split in two counties

(Buckingham and Cornwall) along the 42nd parallel, while the western border of New South Wales was initially set with regard to imperial rivalries harking back to the fifteenth century—historically significant but horticulturally irrelevant.

Significantly, identifying regions has been as much an endeavour to interpret a place as to appreciate the human role within it. It is fitting then to talk of *cultural landscapes* in recognition of this interplay between humans and environments that shapes particular places over time. For Simon Schama 'Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock'. Cultural landscapes are therefore inherently historical spaces that can provide rich insight into the perceptions, values, visions, and aspirations of peoples from the past. Such an outlook is especially apt for Australia, where Europeans colonised 'the biggest estate on Earth'—a landscape that Aboriginal peoples had forged with fire over tens of thousands of years.

## *Exploring Australia's garden history from a regional perspective offers an approach that befits the vast ecological and cultural diversity of the continent*

Much smaller in scale, of course, gardens and parklands are easily recognisable as cultural landscapes. They are products of people trying to make sense of place and are deeply invested with historical meaning and memory. Exploring Australia's garden history from a regional perspective offers an approach that befits the vast ecological and cultural diversity of the continent in turn providing an opportunity to undertake comparative studies that are international in scope, but local in scale.

Environmental historian **Ruth Morgan** is a graduate of the University of Western Australia. She is a Lecturer in history at Monash University and is a Visiting Scholar at the Bill Lane Center for the American West at Stanford University in early 2013.



Liz Chappell

# Garden evolution in New England

The 2013 annual national conference of the Australian Garden History Society will be hosted by the Northern NSW sub-branch when the distinctive regional landscapes of New England will be centre stage.

## The New England plateau

The oldest gardens in New England have endured social change and an unforgiving climate, sheltered by canopies of elms and oaks now approaching their second century. Custodians of these rural gardens are often descended from the region's pioneers.

Settlers and stockmen were the first Europeans to venture into the area of northern New South Wales called 'New England', so-named because of its similarity in climate to the 'old country'. Although the explorer John Oxley had crossed the Great Dividing Range in 1818, he skirted only the southern edge of the tableland, near present day Walcha, before heading to the coast. Similarly in 1827 Allan Cunningham passed across the western slopes towards the Darling Downs in what is now Queensland.

In 1832 the first settlers travelled north from the Hunter Valley, driven by drought and a thirst for more land. When the first settlers, Hamilton Collins Semphill and Edward Gostwyck Cory arrived with their livestock they discovered a volcanic plateau, with grassy plains interspersed with sclerophyll forests of white gum and stringy bark. Cory gave his name—also that of his home village in England—to his holding, Gostwyck Station.

The New England plateau, extending 200 kilometres from Walcha in the south to the Queensland border, is generally less than 100 kilometres wide. Soils are predominantly granitic with outcrops of basalt, which proved the most productive farming soil, often chosen for the site of the head stations and thus the established gardens we admire today.

It is not a gentle place. New England's altitude of above 900m brings severe winters, with heavy frosts but snow seldom settles on the ground. Rainfall averages around 800mm and falls mostly in summer, on the edge of the monsoon patterns. Strong winds blow from the eastern escarpment, frosts can drop the temperature.

A veil of early morning fog over the frosted autumn garden at Devon House near Glen Innes—the oldest trees in this garden were planted by John Robert Chappell after he selected the property in 1864.

Photo: Elton Squires





Heavy frost settles over the formal garden at Palmerston, a former Dangar family property near Armidale, highlighting the geometric outlines of garden beds and the precisely clipped hedge.

Heritage Centre, University of New England Archives (A1473 no. 09)

In 'South of my Days' (1940), poet Judith Wright—who grew up on a family property east of Armidale—characterised it as high lean country.

South of my days' circle, part of my blood's country,  
rises that tableland, high delicate outline  
of bony slopes wincing under the winter,  
low trees, blue-leaved and olive, outcropping granite—  
clean, lean, hungry country.

Its altitude, higher than most of the British Isles, gives New England its distinct climate and its unique gardening challenges. Skies are clear and

starry, especially on winter nights when the frost crackles underfoot. Winter days are a joy when the air is crisp and sunshine brings the mercury to over 20 degrees at midday. In midsummer the temperature rarely rises to 30 degrees. Pastures and gardens retain their lushness from regular storm rain. This combination of cool climate and predominantly summer rainfall is not found anywhere else in Australia explains Armidale gardener Marilyn Pidgeon, whose *Gardening Secrets* (1991) is the only gardening book specific to New England.

## Early pastoral gardens

The name New England was in common usage before it became official in 1839. Until then it was outside the 'limits of location' of the early colony, and government from Sydney had little or no control on over how the land was settled. Legislation in 1839 defined the pastoral district of New England and its first land commissioner, George James MacDonald, was appointed. He established his head station on the present site of Armidale, adjoining the Saumarez run (now a National Trust property with a well preserved Victorian-era garden). No fewer than 122 pastoral runs had already taken up the best grazing country by the time the district was gazetted.

Artists Edward Thompson (1848) and Conrad Martens (1856) visited the New England area when this pastoral phase was in full swing, capturing images of substantial homesteads with developing gardens. In 1841 only 71 females

The solid stone homestead Salisbury Court (built in the mid-1840s to replace an earlier cottage) and its garden, photographed here in 1898, is one of the most comprehensively documented estates in New England due to continued ownership by descendants of the Marsh family.

Heritage Centre, University of New England Archives, (HRCF 4610)





The garden at Gostwyck, a Dangar family property east of Uralla, was embellished with new avenues and specimen trees during the 1890s by its Kew-trained gardener Frederick Charles Tayler (brought to Australia by the White family of nearby Saumarez homestead).

Heritage Centre, University of New England Archives (HRCP 0468)

were counted in the district. Five years later—according to R.B. Walker in *Old New England* (1966)—there were 475, and 1756 men of European background.

When Eliza Marsh arrived as a new bride at Salisbury Court—a division of 70,000 acres (27,000 ha) from Cory's original holding in 1840—she found an ideal home for the elm and oak trees and grapevine she had carried on the voyage out. In general it was women who brought the trees, hedging plants, and roses, evocative of a homeland they would rarely see again. One exception was the Everett brothers, John aged 25 and George aged 22, who took up land west of present-day Guyra in 1939. Using the local aboriginal name Ollera ('sweet water'), they brought acorns from their home in Gloucestershire to establish the trees still present in the property's garden and surrounding paddocks.

The early gardens in New England were generally simpler than their counterparts in the south of New South Wales. Scarcity of labour meant that although trees and shrubs were planted in an attempt to recreate an English landscape, garden designs were not elaborate, explained local historian, Graham Wilson, 'Manpower to work in the garden was only available after harvest and shearing'.

The New England district was settled at the same time as transportation ceased, so limited convict labour was available. Farmhands and shepherds were mostly assisted immigrants from Britain or

first-generation Australians. Few fortunes were made in New England, where the depleted granite soils produced only mediocre pastures and the brief growing season limited crop production. Its mineral deposits were neither abundant nor lucrative.

Still most of the early settlers stayed, some now onto their sixth or seventh generation. They grew to love the undulating landscape, punctuated by giant granite boulders and rimmed with piecrust shaped hills, hazed in blue from their cladding of eucalypts. They marvelled at the precipitous gorges and waterfalls of the eastern escarpment as they struggled to find a viable route to and from the coastal towns of Grafton and Port Macquarie.

Wherever these new settlers made a home, they also created a garden. Today, clumps of Lombardy and silver poplars, windbreaks of radiata pines, and copses of English elms along with a few gnarled apple trees show where these long abandoned timber cottages were built with such optimism.

Those—like my great grandparents—who had come to Australia as assisted immigrants to work on the pastoral runs were joyous at the chance to acquire land. For a farm labourer such opportunity would have been undreamed of back in England. Their journey, first as steerage passengers aboard ship for almost four months, then by bullock dray up the Great Dividing Range to a landscape beyond their imagination, allowed for only the most utilitarian possessions. When the time came to establish a garden on their selections,



they cleared the natural bushland and exchanged between friends and neighbours cuttings of the hardiest European trees and carefully harvested vegetable seeds.

Our early settlers were great plant propagators. Even today we can trace family connections and visiting patterns from the old plants in their garden. Cutting-grown shrubs of spirea, elaeagnus, and mahonia were passed from homestead to homestead. Indestructible yuccas and crinums persist on sites where no home or garden has existed in living memory. Roses 'Dorothy Perkins' and 'Félicité et Perpétue' realise their climbing potential over ruined chimneys and rusting water tanks.

Early garden photographs display geometric beds of snapdragons, pansies, and marigolds in the front gardens of the grander homesteads. At Saumarez—which predates Armidale city—the glasshouse and cold frames in which these bedding plants were grown are still intact.

Saumarez had been built for Francis James (F.J.) White in two stages in 1888 and 1906. Its garden includes mature Chinese elms, ginkgo, a Norwegian spruce and various maples from the late nineteenth century, a range of trees rarely seen in the early gardens of the area.

An uncle of F.J. White, Frederick, commissioned Canadian-born architect John Horbury Hunt to design a gentleman's residence for him south east of Armidale. This property, Booloominbah, was completed in 1888. Horbury Hunt also designed the imposing St Peters Cathedral in Armidale and the small private church on Ollera Station, Guyra. Reluctant to take over and maintain the huge

homestead after Frederick's wife Sarah died, her heirs donated it to found a university college in 1938, becoming the University of New England in 1954. Booloominbah's park-like surrounds of mature exotic oaks and elms, together with preserved and replanted indigenous trees, give the University a unique character amongst Australia's tertiary education campuses.

## Town gardens

Urban development began in the 1860s, with Armidale gazetted as a municipality in 1863, followed by Glen Innes, Inverell, and Tenterfield in 1872. The Robertson Land Act of 1861, enabling closer settlement for agricultural selections up to 320 acres (123 ha), prompted population growth.

'There was no real quality of life in New England until the 1870s when churches, schools, shops and parks were established', explains Graham Wilson, 'However, colonial governments showed foresight by instructing government surveyors to set aside reserves from 1850 onwards'. Armidale's Central Park was proclaimed on 31 May 1887 although it had been shown on town plans from 1866. In 1882 Brother Francis Gatti, a local Capuchin monk, volunteered to look after plants in the park and was commissioned to go to Sydney to select 400 trees. Many of these were presumably sourced from the Sydney Botanic Gardens, a documented source of trees for both the Armidale and Glen Innes parks. The 44-acre (17 ha) parkland and playing fields bordering the Rocky Ponds Creek in Glen Innes was gazetted in 1889 and developed with a £500 grant procured by Sir Henry Parkes.

An unknown New England garden (believed to be Gostwyck) displaying typical characteristics of local farm estates with its mix of extensive productive areas (vegetable gardens and orchard), modest ornamental displays, easy access to water, formal boundary tree plantings, and distant views of the undulating countryside.

Heritage Centre, University of New England Archives (HRCF 8474)







The Bona Vista garden, designed in the 1880s and photographed shortly after; retains its gravelled walkways, beds of roses and perennials edged with Victorian terracotta tiles, and many of its early trees.

Heritage Centre, University of New England Archives (HRCP 4286)

The railway came to Armidale in 1882 and through Glen Innes to Tenterfield by 1886, enabling better transport of plants to the north of NSW. Rail transport remained as a key source of plant procurement for enthusiastic gardeners until the 1950s. An increasing range of seeds for colourful bedding plants appeared in catalogues and general stores alongside the necessary vegetable seeds in the early twentieth century and nurseries began in the major centres. Dedicated gardeners still relied, however, on mailing a cheque with their request to nurseries in the NSW Blue Mountains or Victoria's Dandenong Ranges and awaiting their parcel of gardening inspiration to arrive by train.

## Garden history in New England

In 2005 several owners of historic homesteads and gardens in the New England district recognised that the special qualities of their properties should be actively conserved and promoted. A meeting was convened at Salisbury Court, where the decision was made to establish a sub-branch of the Australian Garden History Society embracing New England. 'The popularity of garden visiting through Australia's Open Garden Scheme had made us aware of just how many significant gardens there were in the area. We have a contingent of families who are still on their original

properties and are familiar with the history of their own gardens', observed Sir Owen Croft of Salisbury Court, who was the sub-branch's inaugural president. Members of the Northern NSW sub-branch are looking forward to showcasing the distinct qualities of their region and its gardens to conference delegates in October 2013.

## Further reading

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**Liz Chappell** is joint Deputy Chair of the Northern NSW sub-branch of AGHS. She is the fourth generation to live and garden at her family homestead Devon House near Glen Innes. Liz writes a regular gardening column for the local newspaper.

R. Brown, Iter Australiense, 1802–5.  
[Presented by direction of J. J. BENNETT, 1876.]

No. 2196

*Helichrysum bracteatum*

*Xeranthemum oides aurea*  
dne. not 1837. Nephthaly  
*Xeranthemum aureum* 1837



Ian Telford

## Our everlasting legacy

Detail of the Robert Brown *Helichrysum*/  
*Xerochrysum* specimen  
(collected in August  
1802 during his  
Australian stay).  
Reproduced by permission  
of the Natural History  
Museum

Australian Everlastings—once placed in the genus *Helichrysum* but now split into several genera (including *Xerochrysum*)—are a focus for botanical research in Armidale, in the process revealing local species with horticultural promise.

Australian Everlastings or Paper daisies have been cultivated in European gardens for over 200 years. In fact, the most common species of eastern Australia was described by the French botanist Étienne-Pierre Ventenat from plants grown in the Empress Joséphine's garden at Malmaison as *Xeranthemum bracteatum*. Today the species is known as *Xerochrysum bracteatum*, the generic name derived from the Greek *xeros* (dry) and *chrysos* (gold), the specific epithet Latin for the petal-like bracts surrounding the flower heads.

When a botanist describes a new species, a preserved, pressed, and dried specimen known as a type specimen is designated; this fixes the application of the name. Plant specimens

housed in herbaria provide (almost) everlasting material for research, not only in taxonomy—the naming and classification of plants—but also into horticulture, ecology, and the spread of weeds. Studying early collections is like a walk through history, but more on that later.

The N.C.W. Beadle Herbarium (named after Foundation Professor of Botany Noel Beadle) at the University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, is a regional herbarium leading research into the plants of north-eastern New South Wales, but also into broader fields in Cyperaceae (the Sedge family) and Cucurbitaceae (the Cucumber and Melon family). North-eastern New South Wales and adjacent south-eastern Queensland have long been known as a biodiversity hotspot named the 'McPherson-Macleay Overlap' by Dr Nancy Burbidge, where plants of northern ancestry and those with southern affinities meet. Known only from here and mostly confined to the montane forests are many endemic taxa including the family Petermanniaceae and the only Australian



representatives of families Berberidopsidaceae (*Berberidopsis corallina* is the Chilean coral vine) and Trimeniaceae. Our region is particularly diverse in Everlastings of the genus *Xerochrysum*.

Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander made the first collections of *Xerochrysum* in 1770 on Cook's first voyage to the Pacific. Thirty-four years later, Robert Brown, botanist on H.M.S. *Investigator* under the command of Matthew Flinders during the first circumnavigation of Australia, also collected specimens of the genus. Meanwhile, biologists aboard a French expedition under the command of Nicolas Baudin were also collecting Australian plants as well as animals for the pleasure gardens and zoo of the Empress Joséphine. Remarkably in such an expanse of Australian coastline the two expeditions met in April, 1802, prompting Flinders to name Encounter Bay. Seeds of an Australian Everlasting were taken back to France and the plants flowered in the garden at Malmaison, allowing Ventenat to name *Xeranthemum* (later *Xerochrysum*) *bracteatum*. The French have long fancied Everlastings—their Immortelles—as garden subjects.

Robert Brown, working on his Australian collections as Banks' botanist, matched his collection from Keppel Bay (near the present

day site of Gladstone) with the earlier collection from the Endeavour River. At the time, these collections were assigned to an African species well known by the collectors, *Xeranthemum aureum*. Later recognised as a new species, the plant was named *Helichrysum banksii* by Allan Cunningham and published in 1834. This name has rarely been used, a situation we intend to remedy through our research at the N.C.W. Beadle Herbarium.

## Our intrepid botanist-explorer Allan Cunningham turns up again as collector of another new species, again not recognised until revealed by our research

Our intrepid botanist-explorer Allan Cunningham turns up again as collector of another new species, again not recognised until revealed by our research. During his explorations in 1827 in which Englishmen first sighted the Darling Downs, Cunningham, returning southwards, tried to pass through the rugged granite mountains at the present Queensland–New South Wales



Ian Telford in the N.C.W. Beadle Herbarium at the University of New South Wales regaling visitors on the significance of a specimen collected locally by Allan Cunningham in 1827.  
Photo: Richard Aitken

border near Wallangarra. Here, an Everlasting differing in solitary large flower heads from a perennial rootstock, was collected. This, together with the perennial coastal species of Banks and Brown, were misplaced in the common annual *Xerochrysum bracteatum*.

Plants that have been originally named in the genus *Xeranthemum*, then transferred to *Helichrysum*, and now in *Xerochrysum*, highlight how confusing name changes in taxonomy can be. How the genus is defined has caused the difficulty. *Helichrysum*, when defined in a broad sense, included Mediterranean, southern African, western Asian, and Australian species. Modern studies, including DNA sequence data, have shown that this broadly defined *Helichrysum* should be split into several genera. *Helichrysum* in the modern, narrower sense, contains the Mediterranean, southern African, and western Asian species. Shrubby Australian species previously assigned to *Helichrysum* are now placed in *Ozothamnus*, and many herbaceous species in *Chrysocephalum* and *Xerochrysum*.

At the University of New England, we have been conducting research into *Xerochrysum*. Firstly, species are intuitively separated based on morphological characters. These putative new

species can then be tested by analyses, using both morphology of habit and vegetative, floral, and fruit attributes, and DNA sequence data. When shown to be distinctive species, the names can be formalised in a scientific publication. We have recognised five unnamed species in the McPherson-Macleay Overlap, three of which occur on the New England Tableland and are awaiting formal recognition.

Everlasting species of *Xerochrysum* are well known in horticulture, particularly the coloured annuals. Our new perennial species are of outstanding horticultural potential. The species first collected by Cunningham bears many golden to bronze, single-stemmed inflorescences. Early-flowering and perennial, it would make a showy addition to the perennial border, and to the cut-flower trade.

Historic *Helichrysum*/  
*Xerochrysum*  
herbarium specimens  
collected by Joseph  
Banks and Daniel  
Solander (1770),  
Robert Brown  
(1802), and Allan  
Cunningham (1827).  
The Cunningham  
specimen (right) was  
collected from the  
granite country near  
the present Girraween  
National Park, the  
first collection of the  
Everlasting with the  
solitary inflorescences  
on stems from the  
basal leaf rosette.

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Ian Telford is Honorary Curator of the N.C.W. Beadle Herbarium, School of Environmental and Rural Studies, University of New England. After 34 years employed at the Australian National Botanic Gardens as collector/botanist, in retirement still presses plants, completing an MSc in 2009 on the genus *Cucumis*, naming five new species, and is currently working towards a PhD researching the family Phyllanthaceae.

[une.edu.au/herbarium/](http://une.edu.au/herbarium/)







Peter Freeman

## *Three cottage landscapes: a reflection on forty years of conservation practice*

Strong regional characteristics of the eastern Riverina in NSW, the NSW south coast, and southern Italy, both differentiate and unite each of the cottage landscapes lovingly conserved and retold here.

When I reflect on the projects I have been involved with over the past forty years, it is the small project ‘jewels’ that I remember. I am reminded of those projects that have been small enough to lavish attention on, yet involved and intricate enough to sustain my interest over the course of the project, which was more often than not a period of several years. They were not projects which were financially rewarding, but I gained hugely from them. They were projects that have been instructive in the ways of ‘seeing’ buildings and their landscapes. I have chosen three cottage landscapes in disparate locations, set out within a chronological framework and a personal narrative.

### **Appletrees on the Old Dudauman Road, Cootamundra, NSW**

At the time Tanny and I moved to Cootamundra, in the eastern Riverina, not long after we were married, we had both spent extended periods living abroad, and we were both ready for a rural Australian experience. I was taking up the position of Assistant District Architect for the Government Architects Branch of the NSW Public Works Department. We found a deserted and semi-derelict pisé cottage about seven kilometres from town, persuading the owners to allow us to rent and restore the house and its home paddock. This we did.

Appletrees, as we named the cottage, was built in the late nineteenth century to a four square plan adopted throughout the eastern Riverina, and utilising a traditional pisé construction, for which the Riverina is now justly famous. The cottage was sited on the undulating hills to the west of Cootamundra township, and separated from it by the ‘Gap’; a low range of hills immediately to the west of the town.

The former manse and the Presbyterian Church at Moruya, 2012.

Illustration: Peter Freeman

These foothills started to flatten out no more than fifty kilometres down the Old Dudauman Road, and by Dudauman and Temora the traveller would be in those long 'sunlit plains extended'.

The eastern and formal front of the house looked over an old orchard and small dam, and soft, folding hills on which sheep grazed. But no one came to the eastern entrance. Everyone came to the western back door, which was reached by a path between two rows of lucerne trees, which crackled and burst all through the hot summer days. The back verandah had also housed rabbits, which chewed away at the moist pisé lower walls, and a variety of snakes. So we set to work to restore this wonderful, enveloping cottage and its modest, but functional, landscape.

Pisé, or rammed earth, is a splendid building material, which insulates and protects. However, pisé will only last as long as it is in turn protected by a verandah or a sheltering structure. The plan of our pisé building was simplicity itself, and every room was fashioned from yard lengths. Thus the rooms were composed in sectional and plan form by three, four, and five yard dimensions. The best room was a perfect cube.

There was a similar intuitive and native intelligence about the landscape. The orchard was on the eastern, protected side, and the western lucerne tree avenue sheltered us from the fierce low western sun, and the harsh north-westerly winds, which would sweep in unannounced. In the winter the pink blossom of the almond trees, which lined the gullies to the south east of the cottage, would provide colour to the dull landscape palette, as would the flowering Cootamundra wattle trees to the east of the cottage. In drought years the lucerne leaves became a food supplement.

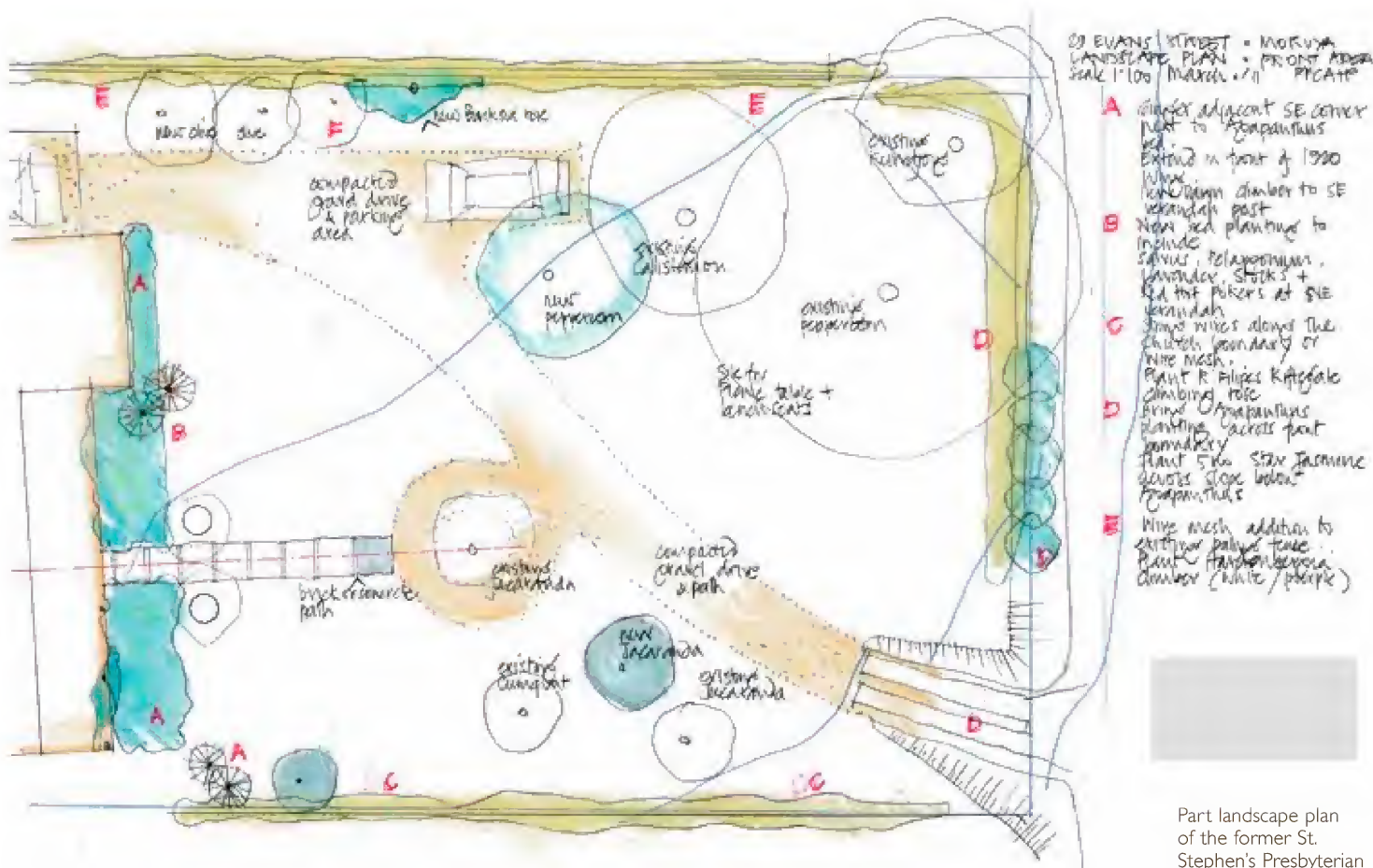
*The genius of this building and landscape was that it was constructed of locally available materials and species, such as gravel, cypress pine, fieldstones, and lucerne trees*

Reconstructed elevations of the original pisé cottage and kitchen and landscape of our cottage on the Old Dudauman Road near Cootamundra NSW (1973).

Illustration: Peter Freeman







Part landscape plan of the former St. Stephen's Presbyterian manse at 29 Evans Street, Moruya NSW, 2011.

Illustration: Peter Freeman Pty Ltd Conservation Architects & Planners

The genius of this building and landscape was that it was constructed of locally available materials and species, such as gravel, cypress pine, fieldstones, and lucerne trees. Only the window joinery, corrugated iron roofing, and orchard trees were imported. There were also a few exotic trees and shrubs, and a little bit of stone patterning incised into the pisé rendering of the eastern elevation, but these foreign ornaments only heightened the intuitive 'rightness' of this marvellous cottage building and landscape.

## The former Presbyterian Manse, Moruya, NSW

After some years in Canberra we succumbed to the challenge and delight of restoring a nineteenth century timber farmhouse sited on the 'Gundry' hill, to the west of the township of Moruya, on the south coast of NSW. We had always been intrigued by another old timber building sited adjacent St Stephen's Presbyterian church in the 'old' part of town. The house had a certain mystery, as it was sited high above its street entrance, on a granite knoll, and was shielded from public view by an ancient peppercorn tree and a juvenile kurrajong. The fact that it had apparently been long untenanted and uncared for made the cottage even more intriguing. Then a 'for sale' notice appeared and we arranged an inspection.

Although the grounds, which had once accommodated the St. Stephen's Presbyterian manse, had been halved about fifty years previously, the landscape was still in fair condition. Internally, we found that the 1860s wallpaper decoration was virtually intact. So we suggested to the Historic Houses Trust of NSW that the property should be purchased under its Endangered Houses Fund scheme, to be restored, extended, and made suitable for modern living. Given our intrigue about the origins of the property and its buildings, I embarked on the research and documentation of the property's history. It transpired that the building had been built in 1865, utilising mortise and tenon joints throughout, and employing a rare internal wall lining arrangement using wide Baltic pine panels finished directly with wallpaper.

Our job, as architects and landscape designers, was to guide the transformation of this rare dwelling and its site, such that its values were conserved, and such that it could be put back on the market when our work was completed. The landscape master plan devised by Tanny had four principal aims: to protect the high-set site from the strong northwest and southeast winds, to provide privacy from its immediate neighbours, to augment and introduce original nineteenth century species as far as was possible, and to retain all the significant landscape elements of the site.



The road from Casoli to Guardigrella, 2011.

The bridge over the Aventino River can be seen in the foreground, and a storm is brewing in the east.

Illustration: Peter Freeman

## An apartment in Casoli, Abbruzzi, Italy

These adventures and projects had been the result of serendipitous events and contacts. Thus it was that in Moruya we became friendly with the Porrecca family from Casoli in the Abbruzzi region. Antonio Porrecca had been a market gardener in Moruya for many years. We were offered the opportunity to purchase their apartment in the walls of this ancient hill town, which nestled in the lower folds of the mighty Maiella mountain range, which forms the eastern spine of the Italian peninsula.

Thus we purchased a two-room apartment, which had once housed stables (below), and living quarters (above). But the real delight was the cultural and natural landscape of Casoli and its surrounds. The town is sited near the confluence of the Aventino and Sangro Rivers, and the folding hills around the town accommodate a rich cultural landscape of roads, settlements, hedgerows, and cropping and grazing lands. The roads run along the ridges, and the farming lands slope away toward the watercourses in the gullies below. The ridges accommodate ancient oak forests, and olives, walnuts, figs, apples, pomegranates, fennel, thyme, and capsicum thrive in the rich soil.

*the real delight was the cultural and natural landscape of Casoli and its surrounds ... This was, and is, a town in tune with its landscape*

The rich volcanic soil provisions a daily delivery of vegetables and fruit to the Casoli town square, a weekly market held along the town's Corso, which overlooks the rich olive groves planted on the slopes below the town, and the annual harvest festival is attended by people from all over Europe. This was, and is, a town in tune with its landscape.

## Postscript

I guess that some of the lessons of forty years of work are that 'small is beautiful', and that every building and landscape has a story to tell, a story which can be retrieved by patient and careful research. I have also come to believe that the qualities of intuition, perseverance, and a degree of luck are essential to any successful conservation undertaking.

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Richard Aitken

## *Lionel Gilbert: botanical historian extraordinaire*

Australian garden history relies on a solid foundation of research and analysis undertaken by pioneering researchers and Lionel Gilbert is amongst the most distinguished of this emeritus group.

I had the good fortune to meet Lionel Gilbert and his wife Margaret in Armidale recently. I had long known of Lionel's works through his honours thesis—known more by repute than its infrequent confirmed sightings. This thesis and its complementary doctoral successor analysed botanical investigation of eastern seaboard Australia from the time of the First Fleet until the late nineteenth century. These are indubitably pioneering works, researched and written in the

1950s and 1960s when previous scholars included the likes of Joseph Maiden. And in meeting Lionel, one feels they may have stepped back into an earlier time.

I came to appreciate Lionel during the 1990s as a generous contributor to *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*. The entries he wrote—often far longer and more interesting than I could have envisaged—were principally on botanical explorers and gardeners. How I came to enjoy Lionel's correspondence, generally delivered in recycled envelopes addressed in a loopy hand and accompanied by letters of discursive interest. Indeed, there was in his script something of Mr Curley, and Lionel seemed to share that philosophic air of Curley Flat's most celebrated denizen.

Lionel Gilbert blends comfortably into his study, which houses many 'old friends' on its shelves and walls.  
Photo: Richard Aitken

My opening gambit was to compliment him on his past research, and then to proceed with my 'ask'. It worked a treat. I was at once regaled with a dense two-pager on an ancient Olivetti. Lionel was working on his magnum opus, *The Little Giant*, a biography of Joseph Maiden, and the prospective list of *Companion* entries, he noted, contained a few 'old friends'. In each entry, research was painstaking and always imbued with Lionel's passion for demonstrable links with the past—especially through headstones, epitaphs, and family contacts.

Lionel Gilbert is a genuine polymath. His service to many fields including education, local history, archives and regional studies, book collecting, and botany has been widely recognised, and for one of such modesty a quick search on the internet reveals a wealth of career detail and honours. But even so, my archival colleagues at dinner that night in Armidale were astonished when I claimed Lionel for garden history, having not known of his great interest in this field.

Lionel Gilbert was born at Burwood, Sydney, in December 1924 and educated at Burwood Primary, Homebush Intermediate High, and Fort Street Schools. He attended Sydney Teachers' College during 1942–43, when influential lecturers included such notables as the naturalist Thistle Y. Stead (*née* Harris) and historians Dr George Mackaness and Dr Charles H. Currey. After service as a radar operator in the R.A.A.F. from 1943–46, he taught in Central and Primary Schools for fifteen years. It was while he was teaching that Lionel began his historical research into Australian botanists, with William Carron his first major biographical interest, corresponding

with his daughters and even meeting one of them—remarkable given that Carron had been born in 1821.

Collecting books has been one of Lionel Gilbert's abiding passions, with a deeply satisfying collection including early Australian travels, botany, and local history. A copy of *The British Botanist* (1820), formerly in his library and donated to the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney in memory of his old colleague, botanist Mary

Tindale, is accompanied by a note: 'I first saw this book in Tyrrell's bookshop when it was next to Wynyard Station in 1944. While thinking of it & many other books, I finally overlooked it in the flurry to get ready to "go north". And so after finally getting to Darwin, and out to a spot a 100 or so miles NE of Darwin, to a radar station, I wrote to my mother asking if she'd mind getting the book & holding it until my return! And Mum and Mrs Tyrrell hunted the spot in the shop I had disturbed, and I've looked after it ever since 1946!'

UNE colleague Russel Ward reputedly once told Lionel that 'All publishers are bastards'—an opinion that resonated with Lionel (if not those exact words)—so he was relieved when his daughter married a publisher giving him new opportunities. His retirement in 1984, after a long and fulfilling career at the University of New England and Armidale College of Advanced Education, continued a period of great productivity, as the subjoined bibliography attests.

In recent years Lionel has been downsizing and various institutions, including the State Library of New South Wales and the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, are now enriched with collections of his papers. He retains some treasured volumes but others have also gone to the Botanic Gardens library: 'It's like kicking out your old friends' he said wistfully. And what friends they were. The librarian shows me a copy of James Lee's *An Introduction to Botany* (1788)—a work that brought the Linnaean theory of botany to English-language audiences—annotated 'L. Gilbert / Melbourne / June 1944', purchased from Seward's scientific bookshop in Bourke Street. But when we spoke, Lionel also lamented the passing of the old days, with the 'old denizens of the Botanic Gardens all gone'.

One of those lamented denizens was Mary Tindale. Now Mary was of the old school and Lionel recounted how after years of addressing each other formally 'she finally suggested we use Christian names (or First names!) at long long last. She said so in a letter. On my next visit to the gardens I sought her, but she was "up-stairs". Gaining permission to go aloft, I finally made it to a remote upper room, fairly stacked out with herbarium boxes. "Are you there, Mary?" I called. A voice replied from behind a pile of boxes: "Ah, Lionel, you got my letter, then?"'

Truly Lionel Gilbert is a living link with a lost era, and through his friendships and writings we are the fortunate beneficiaries of a generous and lasting legacy.

Lionel Gilbert's bookplate, reflecting his polymathic interests.

Library of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, Sydney





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Peter Watts

# *Dame Elisabeth Murdoch (1909–2012): personal reflections of a remarkable woman*

Looking out from  
the walled garden at  
Cruden Farm.

Photo: Simon Griffiths

Dame Elisabeth Murdoch died at Cruden Farm on 6 December 2012 aged 103. She had lived and gardened there for a remarkable 84 years. Dame Elisabeth was the inaugural Chairman of the Australian Garden History Society on its formation in 1980—she stood down from that position after a year and subsequently accepted the role of Patron, a position she held until 1989.

The news came this morning. We all knew it had to happen. But no-one wanted it. The Dame—as she was so affectionately referred to by so many—had finally succumbed. My first thought was of profound thanks for all that this remarkable woman had achieved. My second was also of thanks—but of a lesser kind. It was at one of the first meetings of the AGHS committee at my house in Sydney, with Dame Elisabeth as Chair and me as Secretary. She came for dinner before the meeting, bringing gifts for the children and admonishing me for not knowing how to properly prepare potatoes for roasting. I was firmly



pushed out of the way and given a practical lesson. I can still see those well-gardened hands rubbing lashings of salt into the carefully dried potatoes. I still do them the same way and always think of her as I do, and recall the twinkle in her eye as she so gently chided me for my lack of culinary skill. Somehow this simple act summed up Dame Elisabeth—practical, thoughtful, helpful, humble, surprising, and generous. After dinner she presided over the meeting with rigour, efficiency, and steely determination yet also with great warmth, wit, and inclusivity.

When I had discussed with David Yencken, then Chairman of the Australian Heritage Commission, the idea of an Australian Garden History Society he was immediately enthusiastic and without hesitation said 'Dame Elisabeth has to be the Chair. This will guarantee it is properly established.' What wisdom he showed. And how perfectly did Dame Elisabeth guide us in our formative stages. She was far more than a figurehead. She worked hard, hand writing letters, addressing envelopes, calling in favours, establishing standards, as well as ensuring appropriate administrative and financial procedures were in place. No detail escaped her. No task was too hard or too menial.

I ran into her in the back row of an Ansett flight as we were both going to an interstate meeting of the AGHS. 'I thought you would have been allocated a better seat' I said rather naively. Her family did, after all, own the airline! 'What poppycock' she retorted; 'A total waste of money to be up the

front.' She was frugal with herself (apart from her beloved garden at Cruden Farm), generous with the organisations she supported. The AGHS was no exception. Provided the case was well articulated and the need demonstrable, she supported it. There was no fuss. A cheque arrived and she shunned thanks. These acts of generosity put the AGHS onto a firm footing. Ever wily she was also the first to ask if her contributions were attracting an appropriate rate of interest. The AGHS has a great deal to thank her for.

There could have been no better person to lead the establishment of the Australian Garden History Society. Dame Elisabeth combined the gifts of a fine eye, immense horticultural knowledge, practical gardening skills honed through long practice, and a drive to continually experiment and improve. She developed her garden over 84 years, always looking to the future. Well into her eighties she was up at daybreak to tend it, often doing the backbreaking work herself. She lived long enough to develop a garden that in her own lifetime was recognised as one of the finest, and indeed most historic gardens of Australia. It seems remarkable to think that she was 20, and newly married, when a then 33-year-old Edna Walling came to design part of her garden at Cruden Farm in 1929.

But there was so much more. When the AGHS was born Dame Elisabeth was already 73 and her network, her skills and long experience as a committee member, and her persuasive powers were evident from the first day. She used all to guide the values and interests of what was then



Dame Elisabeth Murdoch pictured at Cruden Farm, portraits published to accompany Anne Latreille's profile on Dame Elisabeth—our first profile in this journal's very first issue 1 (1), 1989.

Readers might also wish to seek out Anne's book *Garden of a Lifetime: Dame Elisabeth Murdoch at Cruden Farm* (2007) and her excellent obituary for Dame Elisabeth in *The Age* (7 December 2012).

**Peter Watts** is a past Chairman of the Australian Garden History Society (1998–2003) and was inaugural Director of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW (1981–2008).

an unusual gardening organisation—one that combined an interest in history, horticulture, fine design, landscape conservation, and the environment. Those interests still drive the AGHS and set us apart from others. Much of the credit for that must go to Dame Elisabeth.

After stepping down as Chairman Dame Elisabeth continued her association with the AGHS as its very active Patron. She epitomised the role of a Patron—always willing to give advice when it was sought, never intruding, adopting the high

ground and the long view, and providing material assistance in times of need. She sparkled with a deep humanity, had an infectious enthusiasm, radiated charm and warmth, and had that unique capacity to make everyone feel special. When she spoke to you she drew you close and most often held your hand. It was natural, gracious, personal, and spellbinding.

There are many organisations that shared a similar patronage from Dame Elisabeth. How they, and we, will all miss her.



Peter Watts and Dame Elisabeth Murdoch pictured at Cruden Farm on an AGHS visit.

## Dame Elisabeth reflects

These reflections have been edited from an oral history conducted with Dame Elisabeth Murdoch on 9 September 2002 by Jane Holth as part of the Australian Garden History Society oral history project.

My mother was very keen on her garden, in Toorak Road below the village, and it was quite small compared to other properties in those days but it was an acre. My sister Sylvia—a little older than I was—married into the Ritchie family at Delatite, Mansfield, and there was already a large garden there, a beautiful area, and she made a lovely, lovely cottage garden across the river before moving to the bigger garden. I had enormous respect and love of my sister—I think she was one of the outstanding gardeners of her age—and she did inspire me to do my very best to become a good gardener. I think she was my role model.

I was married in 1928 and there was a very small garden here at Cruden Farm. Edna Walling had designed the walled gardens and I had been very involved in making a garden but she didn't consult me very much—it was a difficult time because I was not very experienced and I didn't realise that the walled gardens as planned were really not quite big enough. And they were not altogether in the right position but of course that mustn't be laid at her door, because that was how the land lay and it seemed to be the best place for a garden. But ever since then I've been trying to somehow change those plans so that I could do better in the rest of the garden. So I've really been deeply involved in the garden since 1929. I have a very great feeling for the garden and I have now a remarkable man [gardener Michael Morrison]—we see eye to eye, we think alike—and we have developed this garden gradually. It's one that is always changing. No gardens could be static; you've always got to be moving forward.

It's a wonderful world, the gardening world, because it does attract such interesting people who help to widen your own horizons so much. Gardeners have such an affinity with the earth and the beauty, and there's a serenity in gardening. You don't have quite the same friction or perhaps, difficulty as the other sort of pursuits that people have to follow in their business or professional lives. I think that gardening is so serene and somehow contributes to people's character—that's been my experience. Nearly all the gardening people I know are quite exceptional people and somehow I never quite think gardening people are greedy. They're very unmaterialistic, put it that way. I've opened the garden here so much—tens of thousands of people—and I've never had the slightest bit of damage done.

I've always been interested in history. There was a tremendous widening of interest in gardens, a great proliferation of gardening books, and gardens in England became open to the public. People who travelled saw how valuable it was—although our gardens were so much younger—that we must start to record the history and build it up. When you have visited those wonderful gardens, which go back hundreds and hundreds of years, you realise how important it is to record history. I think people who have travelled and had those experiences realised how very important it was that we should start and build up our history.

David Yencken approached me and really sort of almost bullied me into accepting the idea that there should be an Australian Garden History Society and that I would help it get going. He's a very forceful person, David, and it's very hard to say no. I don't quite know who put the idea into David's mind but certainly there were a lot of people who were really ready for it and were very enthusiastic in helping it get going. I've always been an



enthusiastic person and I've been probably helpful in getting quite a number of things going, and with my keen interest in the garden I threw myself into it and I think got off to a good start.

It was to start the historical records, to build up the history, the past history and to look to the future—how it could be strengthened and how it could be recorded. I don't know about a philosophy—I think there was a lot of enthusiasm for starting an Australian Garden History Society—maybe a lot of us weren't very clear in the heads but we were enthusiastic and the idea appealed to us. It had quite a small beginning but it didn't take long to get off to a very sound organisation and I very much admire the people who came, joined up and took the movement on—I think they've done very well.

I think in time the history which has been built up over our private gardens will be very interesting indeed, especially as, alas, it's not been easy to develop and maintain large gardens. I think that gardens are becoming smaller and it's those fewer, larger, old historical gardens that will always be very significant in the history of gardening in Australia. It's such a varying climate. I know so little about gardening in any other state but they, all of them, have things wonderfully, particularly suited to their climate, and of course

the Australian Garden History Society covers the whole of Australia. The Society deals a lot with botanical history and botanical art, too, so it's a very a comprehensive society which covers anything and everything to do with horticulture. The Society was very widespread, with interested people from all areas. I don't think there was any very strong dissension in the Australian Garden History Society because, you know, you've always got to think that their aims and objectives are much bigger than the personal view or interest.

I'm full of admiration as to how it's developed—far beyond my expectations—and for the people who, for many, many, many years, you know, bore the heat of the day and the worries and the difficulties that come to everything, mostly on having enough money and how it was managed. I think they've done extremely well. I'm very proud of having had only just the very early association with it; that I helped to get it going. That's what's so pleasing, if you're able to be proud of the way things develop. I am very proud of the Australian Garden History Society.

But you don't stand still—you have to move forward all the time. Just like gardens—they never stand still. The Society has to develop and go forward—there's always room for improvement in anything we do in life. I always travel in hope.

Looking across the front of Cruden Farm.  
Photo: Simon Griffiths





# For the bookshelf



Trisha Dixon, *Adagio: living and gardening mindfully*, Murdoch Books, Milson's Point, NSW, 2012 (ISBN 9781742660943): hardback, 296pp, RRP \$70

Michael McCoy, *The Gardenist: a new way to create inspiring garden spaces*, Plum (Pan Macmillan Australia), Sydney, 2012 (ISBN 9781742610412): paperback, 224pp, RRP \$45



Author-photographer and Australian Garden History Society tour organiser extraordinaire Trisha Dixon Burkitt comes from a family where 'gardening was a love not a chore', and this is evident on every page of a seamless blend of practical gardening lore, memoir, journal, and 'commonplace book'. (The bibliography itself is a primer for the thoughtful gardener.) This celebration of the pleasures of 'slow' gardening and how to 'do it' (as opposed to the instant landscape and formulaic designs demonstrated in magazines, many books, and other media), is also an eloquent call to action on vital issues that need urgent and intelligent national policies: water, biodiversity; coming to terms with our climate and managing the land. Stunning photographs capture the diversity of our landscape and the sense of place so evident in the best gardens (including hers). Whether novice, tyro, or armchair, gardeners will be stimulated and inspired by what Trisha has to say. Serious subjects are disguised by the gift book design (give it to a non-gardener and wait for conversion), but whom better to influence public opinion by their wise sustainability policies than intelligent gardeners who work with the land? You need never feel guilty about sporadic gardening again.

Gardener/landscaper Michael McCoy's Eureka! moment occurred when he realised that the spaces 'defined by plantings [were] as important to any garden as the plants themselves.' This practical and well-written book explains how to use those spaces and plants to create a landscape with an embracing ambience that draws us into a garden, directing our steps through a structured combination of 'hide and reveal', scent, colour and texture. McCoy's life-long passion for plants gives him a deep knowledge of their performance and how to grow them. Using trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, bulbs, annuals, and biennials to add depth to the spaces is explained; lush and intelligently captioned photographs integrate with sound advice on planting appropriate to our fluctuating rainfall. Each section concludes with an excellent

'A brief word...' on how to exploit their strengths and weaknesses and checklists for the plant group. McCoy confesses to having worked mostly in a temperate climate, but the principles he explains are universal.

Sue Ebury

Holly Kerr Forsyth, *Country Gardens, Country Hospitality: a visit to Australia's best*, The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Vic., 2012 (ISBN 9780522861051): hardback, 272pp, RRP \$49.99

Holly Kerr Forsyth's new book will excite those interested in Australian landscape, gardening, and cooking. On opening *Country Gardens, Country Hospitality* you discover an image of a sturdy gravel drive fringed by crisp dry summer grass, surrounding tall eucalypts with hay bales resting against their trunks. Holly leads us down many individual drives into intriguing gardens that reflect the Chinese proverb 'He who plants a garden plants happiness'.

Intimate observations are made of gardens and owners alike, revealing a determination to establish favourable conditions for alien plants in our harsh Australian landscape. Sometimes indigenous plants can be seen over garden fences or incorporated—as is their right—into the garden. Industrious garden owners have produced flowers and in some cases wine for the table. Favourite recipes have been shared, often incorporating produce from marvellous vegetable gardens where I am sure the advice of Prince Charles has been heeded: 'To get the best results you must talk to your vegetables'. Interspersed throughout the book are beautiful Australian landscapes local to those gardens on adjoining pages. My favourite (page 226) portrays the ghostly forms of the critically endangered *Eucalyptus gunnii* subsp. *divaricata*, the Miena cider gum, endemic to Tasmania and restricted to the Great Lakes plateau at an altitude of 800 to 1200 metres. Now critically endangered, work is in progress to prevent extinction.

Holly's writing expresses her obvious joy in the country roads that she has driven and the gardeners she has met. They have exposed their resilience and determination to enjoy their created space and produce delicacies from their unique gardens, even when the Australian weather bats against them.

Robyn Hawkins





# Recent releases

*An Eden of Loveliness, Ballarat Botanical Gardens by Lake Wendouree: a pictorial history*, Friends of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens Inc., Ballarat, Vic., 2012 (ISBN 9780646588933): hardback, 120pp, RRP \$40

Victorians are justifiably proud of their network of regional botanic gardens, and amongst these Ballarat is one of the oldest and most significant. *An Eden of Loveliness* traces the history of this garden (through text and numerous images) from its reservation in the 1850s to the present, with an active Friends group and substantial visitor numbers. This book has been published with the generous support of the Australian Garden History Society.

[www.fbbg.org.au](http://www.fbbg.org.au)

Paul Ashton, Paula Hamilton, and Rose Searby, *Places of the Heart: memorials in Australia*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2012 (ISBN 9781921875731): paperback, 132pp, RRP \$39.95

*Places of the Heart* presents the results of an Australian Research Council funded national survey of non-war memorials which have emerged across the Australian landscape since the 1960s—thus complementing works like *Sacred Places: war memorials in the Australian landscape* (1998) by Ken Inglis. During the forty-year period covered, the authors argue, a transformation has occurred in the ways Australians remember and mourn the past. This book sets out the range of different types, their different purposes, and collective

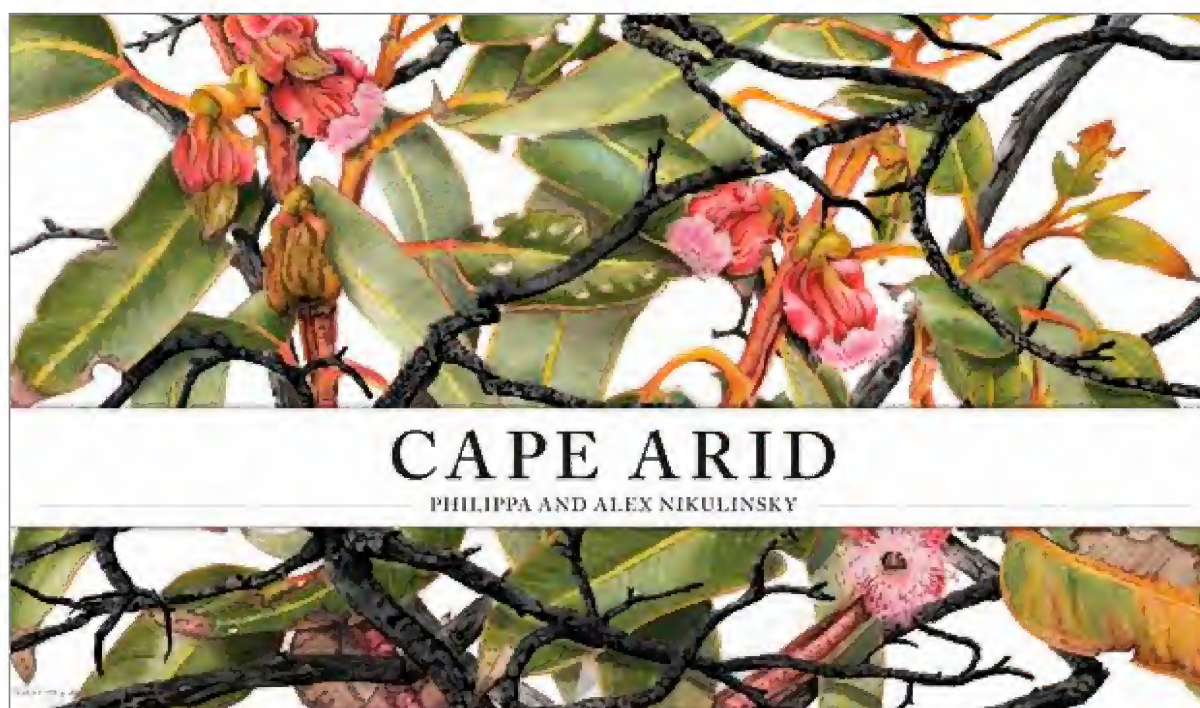
trends in memorialising. Another worthy outcome of the Places of the Heart project is an online database of the 378 memorials surveyed hosted by the Australian Centre for Public History. [www.acph.nicheit.com.au](http://www.acph.nicheit.com.au)

Robyn Ballinger, *An Inch of Rain: a water history of northern Victoria*, Australian Scholarly, North Melbourne, 2012 (ISBN 9781921875281): paperback, 196pp, RRP \$39.95

*An Inch of Rain* sets the development Victoria's northern plains in historical context using water as its focus. Aboriginal settlement, squatting along rivers, the push for irrigation (and its subsequent widespread introduction), and ensuing environmental consequences are closely scrutinised and clearly sketched. Whether we like it or not, this represents the new face of Australian garden history.

Glenn Cooke (ed.), 'Australian Garden History Society 32nd Annual Conference, "It's all about the Mary", Maryborough, Queensland, 19–21 August 2011', special issue of *Queensland Review*, 19 (1), June 2012 (ISSN 13218166): paperback, 168pp, RRP \$30 (through AGHS office or website)

This is a model publication for AGHS conference proceedings. The journal chosen as the vehicle (*Queensland Review*) is highly respected, its publisher (Cambridge University Press) has gravitas, the papers are peer reviewed, individual



Stunning new large-format botanical and landscape images from the south coast of Western Australia.

Philippa and Alex Nikulinsky, *Cape Arid*, Fremantle Press, Fremantle, WA, 2012 (ISBN 9781922089007): hardback, 65pp, RRP \$65.

papers are available for purchase online, and the edited collection forms a useful contribution to an eventual state-based garden history.

**Christine Hansen and Tom Griffiths, *Living with fire: People, Nature and History in Steels Creek*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Vic., 2012 (ISBN 9780643104792): hardback, 200pp, RRP \$49.95**

Readers who have followed Griffiths' moving and insightful commentary on Victoria's 2009 Black Saturday fires and Australia's history of Black Days—in *The Age*, *Inside Story*, and the *Griffith Review*, for example—will find some familiar territory here. But the arguments are well worth restating. As history has proven, fire is a very real part of particular Australian environments, and this book, as the authors' suggest, is 'a parable for all communities who live with fire'. Working closely with the Steels Creek community, the result is a poignant and inspiring personal regional history of a community learning to live with fire, interspersed with four interludes compiled from material produced by the community.

**Gordon Morrison (ed.), *Capturing Flora: 300 years of Australian botanical art*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat, Vic., 2012 (ISBN 9780987234520): hardback 288pp, RRP \$69.95**

Wonderfully illustrated historical overview of Australian botanical art accompanying a popular exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ballarat that is now set to open in Sydney at the S.H. Ervin Gallery in The Rocks from 15 February to 17 March 2013.

**Judith O'Callaghan and Charles Pickett, *Designer Suburbs: architects and affordable homes in Australia*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2012 (ISBN 9781742233468): paperback, 224pp, RRP \$49.95**

The recent past is under increasing scrutiny as historians move ever forward in their quest to explore new territory. In *Designer Suburbs* two experienced curators, authors, and educators shine a light on the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s when firms such as Merchant Builders and Pettitt & Sevitt began constructing project homes. Although gardens are not separately treated in this book, the designed landscape is firmly within sights and a thought-provoking last chapter ('Suburbia on steroids: a land of giants') concludes 'The romantic ideal of the house in the landscape is receding in significance'.

**Gwen Pascoe, *'Long Views & Short Vistas': Victoria's nineteenth-century public botanic gardens*, Australian Scholarly, North Melbourne, 2012 (ISBN 9781921875823): paperback, 286pp, RRP \$49.95**

Gwen Pascoe's history of Victoria's nineteenth-century botanic gardens has been long awaited and garden historians stand in great debt for her detailed site histories and comprehensive analysis, bringing together a mass of far-flung documentation. Broadly chronological with a thematic focus on evolving stages of development, '*Long Views & Short Vistas*' brings its story to the present, concluding on recent rejuvenation of many regional botanic gardens. The Victorian branch of the AGHS has generously supported publication of this book, and the Society can feel justifiable pride in assisting such worthy scholarship. We await similar studies from other states to assist in providing a comprehensive comparative overview of this most distinctive public garden type.

**Andrew Saniga and Hamish Freeman (eds), *From the Debris: a landscape exhibition revived*, Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 2012 (ISBN 9780646591735): paperback, 58pp, out of print**

This is just a foretaste of Saniga's important new book *Making Landscape Architecture in Australia* (UNSW Press, Sydney, 2012) will be reviewed in our next issue. In *From the Debris*, the authors resurrect an exhibition of Australian projects assembled for the 1982 IFLA conference held in Canberra, bringing into print and analysing significant archival material. Produced in a very small print run (and now out of print), *From the Debris* can be consulted in major reference libraries.

**Anne Vale, *The Garden at Dalvui*, Australian Garden History Society [Victorian Branch], South Yarra, Vic., 2012 (ISBN 0958635641): paperback, 12pp, RRP \$6 (through AGHS office or website)**

Another in the series of booklets produced by the Victorian branch of the AGHS, this time showcasing the significant Guilfoyle-designed garden Dalvui in the Western District near Terang and written by Dr Anne Vale. Numerous historic and recent photographs, a plan, and plant list make this an indispensable and inexpensive handbook.



# Dialogue

## Reclassification of the mega-genus *Acacia*

AGH directs readers to a recent article in *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 23 (1) May 2012, by Libby Robin and Jane Carruthers—‘National identity and international science: the case of acacia’. The authors provide an engaging and patiently detailed account of the nitty-gritty complexity of the nomenclatural debates and competing ‘botanical nationalisms’ which complicated the decision to conserve the genus *Acacia* with the type *A. penninervis*, an Australian acacia (decided at the Vienna International Botanical Congress in 2005, and confirmed at the Melbourne IBC in 2011).  
[www.publish.csiro.au/nid/109/issue/6487](http://www.publish.csiro.au/nid/109/issue/6487)

## New director for Melbourne

Congratulations to our sometime contributor Tim Entwisle on his appointment as director and chief executive of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne (following the retirement of Philip Moors). Tim commences in the hot seat in March 2013.

## The French Garden at La Perouse

Following his article in our last issue, Ivan Barko advises that in 2008 geophysicist Doug Morrison made a series of reconnaissance ground penetrating radar (GPR, 250 mHz) traverses across the grassed area from the Lapérouse monument towards Father Receveur’s grave. This reconnaissance was specifically made to test the suitability of the GPR method in discriminating near-surface responses, as could be expected from remnants of the French camp, such as a hedge line, trenches, boat construction, garden beds, man-made objects, and also in identifying the local geology, particularly areas of undisturbed soil and the depth to the buried sandstone plateau. Further tests (GPR, 500mHz) in the same area by geophysicist Antoine de Biran are planned. There is justification from both visual and GPR evidence for a detailed archaeological study to be made of the grassed area that surrounds the Lapérouse monument.



## Northern Ireland and Donegal Spring Garden Tour 7 Days and 6 Nights

18 May to 25 May 2013 inclusive

The temperate climate of Northern Ireland is perfect for gardening, and the many renowned gardens of the area are the legacy of generations of enthusiastic plant hunters and collectors over the past four centuries.

This tour takes in some of the most beautiful gardens and houses of Northern Ireland and Donegal. The tour is carefully arranged to offer visits to a variety of historic houses and gardens; private, including Ballywalter Park, Drenagh, Ballyscallion Park and Benvarren; National Trust properties, such as Mount Stewart and Rowallane, and public gardens such as the Belfast Botanic Gardens.

Ardara Country House [www.ardtara.com](http://www.ardtara.com) in Upperlands provides accommodation and is the central base from which we tour. Pick up for tour is Belfast or Dublin International Airport.

Each day includes a visit to at least one private house for lunch, afternoon tea or dinner where participants will experience hospitality for which Northern Ireland is known. Richard Mullholland is an experienced tour guide and will be driving the group in a comfortable minibus.

This tour may be offered in mid September 2013 depending on interest.

### Enquiries and Bookings

Ann Wegener (Qld branch AGHS) will also be accompanying the tour: [ghesse@bigpond.net.au](mailto:ghesse@bigpond.net.au) or phone 0407 378 585. Cost is \$2950 per person.

## Honorary Life Membership for Jackie Courmadias

At its meeting on 13 August 2012 the National Management Committee of the Australian Garden History Society unanimously adopted a resolution to bestow Honorary Life Membership on Jackie Courmadias.

This honour recognises Jackie's outstanding service to the Society as a member and especially as our long-time Executive Officer, a role she fulfilled with distinction for two decades from 1992 to 2012. The honour acknowledges the vital role she played in maintaining the affairs of the Society over these two decades, her astute advice to its National Management Committee and branch committees, her wise counsel on all aspects of the Society's mission, and her generous service to members, unfailingly undertaken with grace, respect, and good humour. Her contribution to the Australian Garden History Society is unmatched in its longevity and scope, and she has undoubtedly shaped the Society and its achievements, a legacy that we now celebrate.

## Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM was held during the Ballarat Conference on Saturday, 10 November 2012. The election of National Management Committee members was held as part of the meeting. Jan Schapper announced her intention to resign from the committee. John Taylor, who stepped down as the state representative for Queensland, was elected unopposed in her stead as an elected member. (Glenn Cooke was subsequently nominated by the Queensland Branch to succeed John Taylor as state representative.) Various reports were received and Chairman John Dwyer took the opportunity to draw attention to several of the most significant items covered in the annual report and to acknowledge the contribution from outgoing NMC member Jan Schapper.

## Committee elections

At a meeting of the National Management Committee immediately following the AGM, the Committee elected the Society's office bearers. John Dwyer, in announcing his retirement from the Chair, nominated John Taylor as Chairman, who was duly elected. Ray Choate was elected Vice Chairman, Lynne Walker as Secretary, Stuart Read as Public Officer, and Kathy Wright as Treasurer, results that were communicated to the membership by our Patron Sue Ebury during the conference dinner, at which she paid special tribute to outgoing Chairman John Dwyer.

## Outgoing Chairman John Dwyer

During my farewell to our outgoing National Chairman, John Dwyer, at the Ballarat Conference, I mentioned the Australian Garden History Society success in preventing the destruction of elms in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria. John has been an articulate and very effective advocate for the Society, overseeing the successful campaign to preserve this important memorial avenue as well as adding the Society's weight and influence to saving Mawallok's main vista from the visual intrusion of a wind farm.

During his chairmanship, the Society actively broadened its mission to encompass the conservation of cultural landscapes. John was actively involved in the seminars on cultural landscapes organised in Victoria by the Heritage Council and the AGHS, was a well-informed and scholarly joint editor of the published papers, and put many hours into editing *Studies in Australian Garden History*. John, with his steely intellect and meticulous grasp of the issues involved, had few peers in advancing the interests of the Society, overseeing a number of positive constitutional changes. We look forward to seeing John and his wife Joan at future AGHS events and conferences.

**Sue Ebury**





Caroline Grant

# *Opportunity and innovation:*

## *33rd Australian Garden History Society annual national conference, Ballarat, 9–11 November 2012*

George Seddon's 1997 statement 'Gardens are the intersection between the natural and the cultural worlds' formed the theme of the Australian Garden History Society's 33rd annual national conference, held in Ballarat, with visits to gardens in the district as well as pre- and post-conference tours based at Hepburn Springs.

The opportunity to visit and spend some time in Ballarat as a conference delegate rather than a tourist was a great privilege. Being so close to large Melbourne, it is often difficult for an outsider to grasp the idea of Ballarat being a city with a population exceeding 90,000 and main streets (Sturt Street and Main Road) that seem to stretch for miles.

As is customary, the first day of the conference consisted of presentations. These were of a high quality and replete with information, particularly the opening presentation by Stephen Carey showing the geological evolution of Australia, how gold arrived in Ballarat, and a reminder that the volcanoes of Victoria and South Australia are not quite extinct. 'As a matter of fact', Stephen quipped, 'I'm dying for an eruption right now'.

Volcanic activity together with decent rainfall has created fertile soils in the vicinity of Ballarat with other materials including buckshot gravel (used for garden paths) and basalt or 'bluestone' (used for construction).

The concept of historical layers as the interplay between humans and habitat was introduced in several presentations. The Victorian gold rushes of the 1850s disturbed the earlier settlement layers in a manner not unlike a volcanic eruption. First the local Wathaurong people's habits were disturbed when a smattering of European pastoral settlers greatly extended their landholdings during the 1830s and 1840s westward across the volcanic plains. Then as news of the Victorian gold discoveries went out, thousands of people arrived to dig for gold or sell goods and services to the diggers, and with hopes of a new life.

Various tent cities were created as the diggers set about extracting alluvial gold during the early 1850s from river and creek beds, and a muddy mess ensued. Contemporary observer William Howitt thought 'Ballarat in winter ... the most perfect Serbonian bog, on Earth'. After the 'easy' alluvial gold had been won, companies formed to mine veins of gold trapped in quartz well below the surface. Thus impressive landscapes were

Looking across the lake on the Lal Lal Creek, originally dammed in 1847 to provide a wool wash basin for the Lal Lal Estate at Yendon, one of the garden visit highlights of the conference.

Photo: Richard Aitken





Above: Sue Ebury and Stuart Read at the Ballarat conference—the latter customarily bedecked in a collection of plant specimens which had sparked his curiosity.  
Photo: Trisha Burkitt

Below: Participants of the Ballarat pre-conference tour assembled on one of the gently sloping grassed terraces of Sue Ebury's Mount Macedon garden.  
Photo: Christina Dyson

created from wealth generated by gold production combining with the fortune of good soil, moderately reliable rainfall, and human ingenuity.

Perhaps the most impressive new landscape was the town of Ballarat itself, which was surveyed by Assistant Surveyor William Urquhart in 1852, the elevated western portion laid out on a grid and built in one generation. Parks and gardens were soon created. What was once a swamp became Lake Wendouree, used for boating, providing a water supply, and some amelioration from the extremes of Ballarat's climate—dry, hot, and dusty in summer and often freezing and windswept in winter.

Hay was the fuel of the transport system that propelled Ballarat in its earliest days, while timber from the forest was milled for housing, fuelled the foundry furnaces, and propped up the mines and their miles of tunnels. Small wonder then that concern for conserving Victoria's forests began in

the 1850s—even if it was not then known that eucalypts could regenerate in 30 years.

Ballarat's gold rush influenced the future of Australia politically as well as economically, for as Professor Weston Bate reminded us, gold is the democratic mineral. Capital in many skilled hands gave power in a new country, including home ownership rates of 89% in West Ballarat at a time when only 10% of the population owned their own homes in England. Many of these homes were on separate blocks, often a quarter of an acre each. As residents improved their living conditions, they also aspired to provide better opportunities for future generations. The institutions they created, such as the botanic gardens, art gallery, mechanic's institute, and the Royal South Street Society, fostered education, leisure, and ultimately a sense of community that continues to this day.

Plenty of innovative ideas came from Ballarat and the Victorian goldfields. While reflecting on the conference and cooking for Christmas, I learned via Robyn Williams' ABC Science Show that a Ballarat man, Henry Sutton, invented many things including a forerunner of television, which was taken up by John Logie Baird using principles developed by Sutton as early as 1885. Manufacturing industries evolved in Ballarat's hinterland, and diggers and traders became settlers with their own piece of land upon which to express their heart's desire.

We had an excellent session on cultural landscapes with Tim Hubbard and Annabel Neylon, and a presentation on the progression from gardens to landscapes from Ursula de Jong, which later prompted the questions when considering a landscape: 'What is going on in this picture? Where is the money coming from? Who is spending it and how?' Emerging from these questions and a general audience discussion was an understanding that we need to manage competing demands on a landscape. Gardens may be the intersection of the natural and cultural worlds, but acknowledgement needs to be made that natural values are culturally determined. Natural processes such as the weather, geological, chemical, and biological processes which take place over long periods of time are mostly beyond our control, but our responses to them need to be managed more thoughtfully if we wish to conserve landscapes which are precious to us. There has to be an acknowledgement that we cannot expect to unpick everything that has been imported, whether considering plants, agricultural techniques, buildings, roads, boundaries of human construction and other markers comprehended in different ways.



After a day of interesting but sometimes dense scene-setting talks, we were bussed to the Ballarat Botanical Gardens, noting some important suburban gardens and historic places on the way. The botanic gardens, set on Lake Wendouree, feature some very large old trees including avenues of conifers planted in the second half of the nineteenth century when they became popular throughout the western world. Splashes of bold colour are provided by bedding plants, and the Robert Clark Conservatory, designed by Peter Elliot and opened in 1995. Ballarat has a fondness for statuary and its botanic gardens contain a charming statuary pavilion and a collection of bronze busts of Australian prime ministers, Alfred Deakin being the first federal member of parliament for Ballarat, a force for Federation, and Australia's second prime minister. From here we were taken to the Art Gallery of Ballarat, where we were privileged to see the exhibition *Capturing Flora: 300 years of Australian botanical art*, a comprehensive exhibition of Australian botanical art.

As is usual at AGHS conferences, on the second day we had introductions to some of the gardens we would visit, including one very amusing account by Kate Roud, formerly of the National Trust of England and now Head Gardener at local property Mawallok, about 'morning prayers' at Sissinghurst (meaning gardeners' discussion about tasks and priorities for the day) and the banning of 'performance-enhancing trugs'. I pondered on the career paths for gardeners who specialise in old gardens such as Mawallok and Alton, with huge trees, a great variety of plants, and a large volume of historic material to get across both in terms of documentation and interpretation—an issue which gets little attention in Australia.

I found the programme of speakers and the topics chosen very satisfying. For those of us who appreciate gardens but are often looking over the garden fence at the landscape beyond, having an introduction to the volcanic surroundings and the origins of the gold beneath Ballarat from a geologist was wonderful, and for this conference participant it added a new layer of understanding about basalt and gold deposits. Was anything missing? Not much, although I would have liked some discussion about where the food for the thousands of miners came from, the 'productive plots' and orchards that are mentioned in Mandy Stroebe's book *Gardens of the Goldfields* (2010).

The conference had begun in wet weather, whilst we were mostly indoors, but considering Ballarat's

reputation for extremes, we were very fortunate in having fine weather for viewing gardens on the following days, and for the conference to occur after several years of good rainfall following many years of drought. The effects of the drought were pointed out to us on garden visits, including the loss of mature trees at the Ballarat Botanical Gardens, and in changes to gardening styles. This was perhaps epitomised at Lynne and John Landy's garden at Fryerstown where Lynne had begun her garden enthusiastically with English roses, then acceded to the drier conditions with Mediterranean plants and a style of outdoor living reminiscent of the south of France, and in the last stages of the recent drought began using more succulents and other hardy plants.

We have come to expect the highest standards of garden presentation at AGHS conferences and we were not disappointed. I appreciated the many hours of mulching, trimming, and tidying prior to our visits, and the kind welcomes from the garden owners to a group that has grown substantially in size from earlier conferences. Accommodating so many people, often split into groups visiting throughout the day, with so many questions and different needs, is not easy. Our conference organisers, the garden owners, and their helpers did a great job of accommodating us and keeping us entertained, fed, and watered. Hearty congratulations to all concerned.

Hedgehogs, the Castlemaine garden of Margot and Morry Rottem designed by Gordon Ford was also visited on the pre- and post-conference tours.  
Photo: Trisha Burkitt



**Caroline Grant** is a member of the AGHS National Management Committee and is currently organising a tree forum to be held in Perth on 10 May 2013. She is enrolled in a PhD in cultural landscapes at The University of Western Australia.

# Profile: Pamela Jellie

Until very recently Pamela Jellie was a long-standing state representative of the AGHS National Management Committee and twice Chair of the Victorian Branch. Her commitment to and love of garden history and heritage has infused her career as a conservation landscape architect, further reflected in her active involvement with the National Trust of Australia (Vic.) gardens committee, as Chair of the Canterbury History Group, and as a Trustee of the Altona Memorial Park and Williamstown Cemetery.

It was really the Colac Botanic Gardens that got me started. When you're growing up your private domain essentially becomes your world. I had the benefit of the nearby Colac Botanic Gardens in my world. It was such a lovely secret place. I now know that Daniel Bunce's wonderful mature trees—conifers straight out of scenes from English Christmas cards—and the 1910 Guilfoyle plan were factors that contributed to making it such a wonderful place. Of course, it then had a resident, Scottish-trained curator so it really was a showplace. My mother too was a great influence, and her Colac garden was fondly admired by other family members as well. I remember my aunt's visits; she'd arrive by train and we'd collect her from the station then all walk back home together. Practically her first remark upon arrival would be an enthusiastic 'Now Kit, let's have a look at the garden'.

Reflecting on conservation project highlights, two in particular stand out as very special. They were similar in many ways. Both shared an institutional history, and were relatively isolated—or certainly had an atmosphere of isolation. Both were overgrown, entangled, and enshrouded with mystery. I worked on these projects in collaboration with conservation architect Nigel Lewis.

The first was Caloola (the former Sunbury Mental Hospital). The substantial grounds of the nineteenth century hospital had been in gradual decline since its closure in 1992. It was an exciting project to take on. I loved the sense of isolation of the place, which sits high above the town on the north side of a volcanic cone. Although distant from the township, there was a strong relationship between the hospital



and town. The hospital provided employment for local residents. When the Tullamarine Freeway was constructed Sunbury was transformed into a commuter suburb. The fast road, among many factors, gradually altered the shape of the town, the interrelationship between the town and hospital, and the surrounding farmland, as the houses crept up the hill and ever outwards.

The second project, the Abbotsford Convent, was similar in many ways. The garden was spectacularly overgrown, seemingly abandoned in 2005. The Convent is located beside the Yarra River (opposite the Yarra Bend National Park), on the doorstep of inner city Melbourne's industrial (now gentrifying) suburbs of Abbotsford and Collingwood. Its sense of isolation and its magical and mysterious feel remained quite intense. These were aspects of the site that people valued. It was an eerie place, considerably enhanced by front gates thickly festooned with impenetrable ivy. On reflection, I would say that a lack of resources worked largely in our favour at Abbotsford. It meant that much of the work was done with a team of marvellous volunteers who were sympathetic to what we were trying to achieve in restoring an historic garden for the public to enjoy. This continued for many years, but it's changing a little now as often well-intentioned

Pamela Jellie hard at work in the garden of the Abbotsford Convent.  
Photo: Laura Lewis



goals of 'tidying-up', by municipal contractors or corporate volunteers, are at risk of eroding some of the mystery that is so special about the place. It was very exciting to be involved with a large and ambitious project like this from beginning to end. I'll always admire the persistence of Nigel Lewis in getting the project off the ground, presenting the case, getting the right people behind it, in his characteristically sensitive and enthusiastic way.

In addition to those places, I've worked on the preparation of conservation management plans for Victorian pastoral properties in the Western District. Having grown up in the district I'd always known of the large pastoral properties with their substantial gardens. Viewed from afar they seemed like oases in the open and windswept volcanic plains. Though familiar to me at a distance, it was only later—when fortunes changed—that I was able to venture into these fascinating places. A decline in resources generally meant that investment in the non-productive parts of these Western District estates (i.e. the gardens) became difficult to justify. Many gardens began to decline or fall into disrepair. But a benefit, if you can call it that, was that they began to become more accessible. Many were opened to the public for the first time—for working bees, or visits by local historical societies. Wider public access to these wonderful gardens really started with the Australian Garden History Society and then the Open Garden Scheme followed. It was wonderful to see them with their incredible collections of mature trees, towering araucarias, and lavish carpet bedding. You can learn a lot from a historic garden, from the plants that have survived.

In contrast, I also worked on smaller gardens in the Dandenongs such as the George Tindale Gardens in Olinda. These were also substantial gardens but in clearings carved out of the heavily timbered hills, as opposed to a garden of mature trees built up in an open and expansive setting.

My initiation to the Victorian branch committee of the AGHS was the 1994 National Conference based on the regeneration of Mount Macedon gardens after the 1983 bushfires. Later I became Chair when Helen Page was overseas. Some years later I was gently coerced into rejoining the committee and was Chair from 2006 until 2011. A highlight for me was working with an excellent and dynamic committee on the 2009 national

conference based in Geelong. I also enjoyed organising tours. With Rodger and Gwen Elliot we extended the interests of our members looking at vegetation in the natural landscape as well as cultural landscapes. They were generous tour leaders and we had some very successful tours with them. One of the earliest was to East Gippsland exploring the Snowy River environs and the Errinundra Plateau following the logging of this old growth forest. In 2008 Rodger and Gwen also led our tour of the coastal region of Port Campbell and the Otway Ranges. Another rewarding tour was of the Western District in 2006—in the footsteps of Edward La Trobe Bateman and based at Chatsworth House. It was memorable for Tim Hubbard's sermon on Mount Rouse above Kolor, and our visit to The Gums where the owner took us through his paddocks to view his vision for the property. Other tours were around Lake Colac, Sunbury, and the Yarra Valley. With Kathy Wright looking after the bookings and catering, we established a loyal following resulting in some wonderful friendships.

Our advocacy role is a vital one. Who else will look out for our historic gardens? From visiting and working in old and historic gardens I really appreciate that their constant change needs sensitive management and our Society's role as an advocate for historic gardens is more important than ever. The forum at the recent national conference in Ballarat demonstrated the difficulties we face in getting properties listed and protected. From the sidelines I hope to do more to create awareness of the need to protect historic public and private gardens.

Part of the enormous satisfaction of the Abbotsford Convent project was taking it from being totally overgrown and inaccessible to the present-day thriving arts precinct.

Photo: Laura Lewis



# Diary dates

## FEBRUARY 2013

### Saturday 9 Summer picnic in a garden in the Southern Highlands SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Summer picnic at Ben Bullen, Meryla Road, Manchester Square via Moss Vale. From 4.30–7pm. Bring your own food, we will provide alcohol and water. More details in January's 'Inflorescence'. Enquiries to Lyn Esdaile on (02) 4887 7122.

### Monday 11 Kew Golf Club walk and talk VICTORIA

Walk and talk through the Kew Golf Club. Picnic dinner to follow (tables & chairs available) at Willsmere Park which adjoins Kew Billabong, a short walk from the Golf Club. 6pm, Kew Golf Club, 120 Belford Rd, Kew East. Parking available at the Golf Club and Willsmere Park. Enquiries to David Goldsworthy on (03) 9818 8403 or [dsgoldsworthy@optusnet.com.au](mailto:dsgoldsworthy@optusnet.com.au)

### Wednesday 13 A passion for plants SYDNEY

Illustrated talk by Derelie Cherry on 'A Passion for Plants: the life of Alexander Macleay'. 6pm for 7–8.30pm, Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Cost: \$20 AGHS members, \$30 guests, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential. Bookings and enquiries to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or [Jeanne@Villani.com](mailto:Jeanne@Villani.com)

### Friday 15 Nursery breakfast with Charles Weston ACT/MONARO/RIVERINA

Following a breakfast of croissants and coffee, Dr John Gray OAM will talk about the challenges Charles Weston faced and the unparalleled legacy he has left us of the 'city in the landscape'. For more details see flyer of events inserted in this issue of AGH.

### Sunday 17 Houses built of sticks QUEENSLAND

Don Watson will present 'Houses built of Sticks: Queenslander Houses in Maryborough'. 2pm, Queensland Herbarium Seminar Room, Mt Coot-tha Botanical Gardens. Cost: \$10 members, \$15 visitors, includes afternoon tea. RSVP to Elizabeth Teed on (07) 3851 0568 or [geteed@bigpond.com](mailto:geteed@bigpond.com)

## MARCH 2013

### Saturday 9 Historic Richmond and beyond SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Self-drive day to Secret Garden and Nursery, situated in grounds of old Hawkesbury Agricultural College, UWS, Richmond for morning tea, 10.30am. Own travel to Enniskillen Orchard, Grose Vale for lunch and then own travel to historic Tizzana Winery, Ebenezer for winery tour and tasting. Please share cars for this day wherever possible. Enquiries: Lyn Esdaile: ph 4887 7122

### Thursday 14 Huonville and Grove areas TASMANIA

Tour of the Heritage Apple nursery and the historic orchard at Stonehouse. Other stops will be included for morning tea and lunch. Email Elizabeth Kerry at [liz.kerry@keypoint.com.au](mailto:liz.kerry@keypoint.com.au) or Mike Evans at [wilmotarms@bigpond.com](mailto:wilmotarms@bigpond.com) for further details.

### Sunday 17 People, plants, and pre-history QUEENSLAND

Alison Crowther will present 'People, Plants and Pre history: Cultural Interactions in the Botanical World'. 2pm, Queensland Herbarium Seminar Room, Mt Coot-tha Botanical Gardens. Cost: \$10 members, \$15 visitors, includes afternoon tea. RSVP to Elizabeth Teed on (07) 3851 0568 or [geteed@bigpond.com](mailto:geteed@bigpond.com)

### Saturday 23 Scaring the rabbits away ACT/MONARO/RIVERINA

The subject of a talk by Helen Wilson, one in a series of presentations, to be given during the Australian Open Garden Scheme Plant Fair at Lanyon. For more details see flyer of events inserted in this issue of AGH.

## APRIL 2013

### Saturday 13–Sunday 14 Chudleigh/Deloraine area TASMANIA

We'll have a chance to see the new conservatory at Robyn and John Hawkins' home Bentley and to visit other gardens in the area. There are also plans for lectures on landscape and a visit to Lynne and Rod Paul's home in Deloraine. Email Elizabeth Kerry at [liz.kerry@keypoint.com.au](mailto:liz.kerry@keypoint.com.au) or Mike Evans at [wilmotarms@bigpond.com](mailto:wilmotarms@bigpond.com) for further details.

### Sunday 14 Heritage gardens in Wingecarribee Shire SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

A self-drive activity for members and friends as part of the Sesquicentenary of Bowral and Moss Vale celebrations, and the Wingecarribee Heritage Festival. For information contact Laurel Cheetham on (02) 4861 7132 or [l.cheetham@bigpond.com](mailto:l.cheetham@bigpond.com)

### Friday 18–Sunday 21 October AGHS Annual National Conference, Armidale, NSW

The Australian Garden History Society's 34th Annual National Conference will be held in Armidale, 18–21 October 2013.





Christine Reid and Harriet Edquist

## Colonial pastoralism in western Victoria

With regional issues and interests at the forefront of this *Australian Garden History* issue, a current research project in western Victoria embraces this thematic approach. *Colonial pastoralism in western Victoria: a design history 1840–1910* is a detailed study of the design history of Victoria's Western District homesteads and surrounding landscapes.

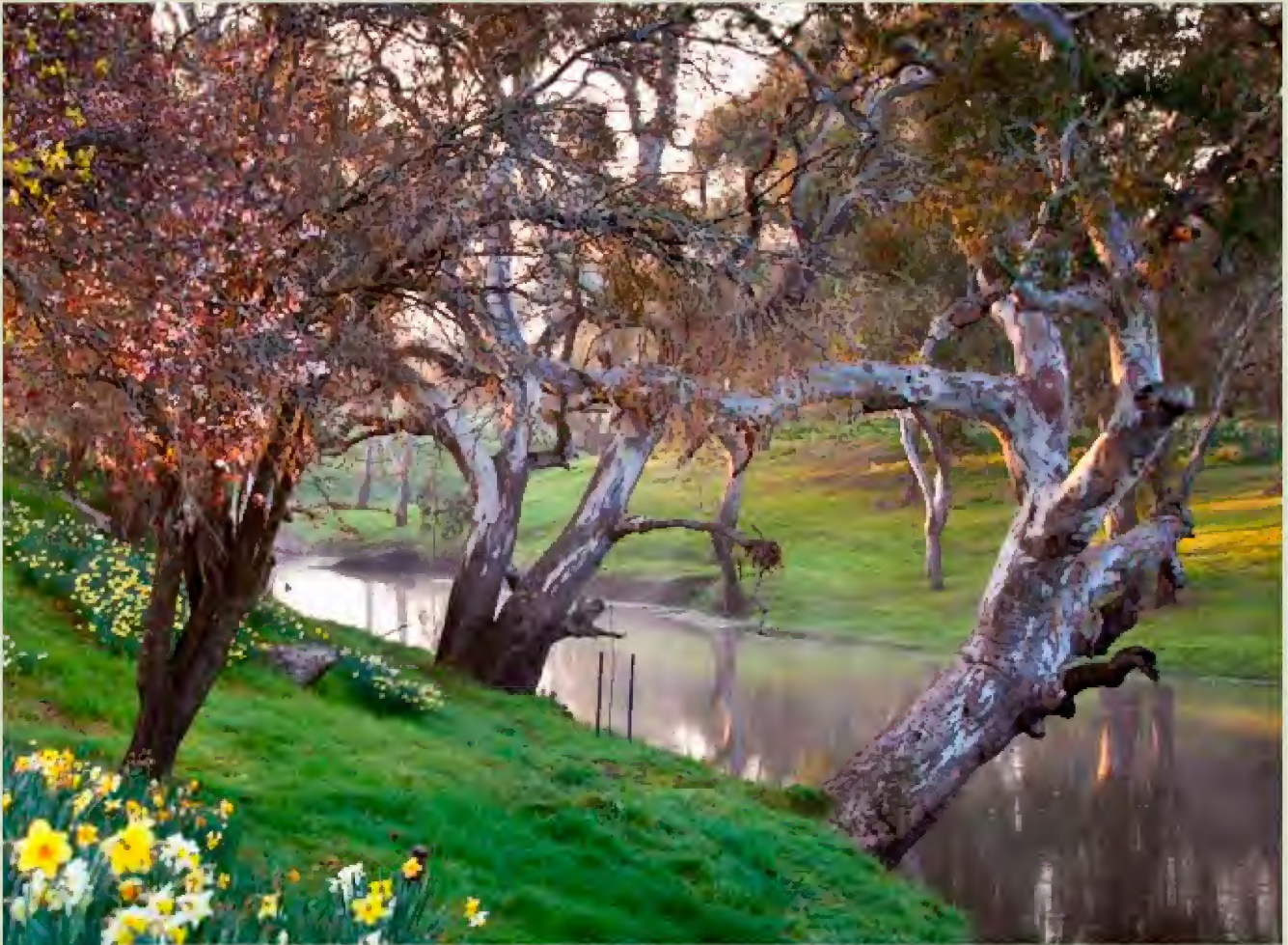
*Colonial pastoralism in western Victoria* is a collaborative and inter-disciplinary project led by Harriet Edquist, professor of architectural history at RMIT University, and Christine Reid, garden writer and historian, combining expertise in architecture, literature, and cultural theory with that of gardens and landscape history. The project has its genesis in the 2010 travelling exhibition *The Stony Rises Project* (initiated by the Design Research Institute at RMIT) and the associated publication *Designing Place: an archaeology of the Western District*. Readers may remember that Harriet Edquist spoke about that exhibition at the 2009 AGHS Geelong conference.

While articles have been published on specific aspects of these homesteads or their architects—and a number are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register and have been included local heritage surveys or in local histories—no study treats them as a unique phenomenon within the context of the cultural geography of the western plains of Victoria. Similarly, garden historians have dealt with the associated gardens of many of these homesteads as singular entities, but rarely as part of a broader understanding of the designed landscape of the region. This Western District landscape is multi-layered with Aboriginal settlements providing the first designed interventions and leading to the creation of the vast plains that so attracted the nineteenth-century British colonists.

The rationale of our project is to position the many homesteads and their landscapes, including gardens, within the broad context of cultural geography and cultural landscapes. The research is thus premised on the idea that many homesteads were designed in relation to the specific landscape of the western plains and often acknowledged

Thomas Clark,  
'Muntham Station',  
oil on canvas, c.1860.  
Hamilton Art Gallery  
(Gift of Tony Miller)





Looking across the Mount Emu Creek at Banongill, Skipton

Photo: Claire Takacs

major features—such as crater lakes, volcanic cones, and rivers—in their layout and design. Conversely, this new wave of settlement altered the landscape according to European conventions of pastoralism.

We are organising our data collection within the broad historical context provided by recent, theoretically based research into colonial settlement and pastoralism. Such an approach, for example, identifies clusters of homesteads around a landscape feature, thus indicating the symbiotic relationship of colonial expansion and the realities of place. In addition, our research examines the complex and layered history of the ways in which the colonial homestead in its widest sense (including residence, gardens, and outbuildings) overlaid the pre-existing cultural landscape with a new order.

For the past two years we have been amassing and cataloguing data, identifying and photographing homesteads—many little known—and beginning the process of analysis. This research and analysis has

been assisted by a grant to the RMIT Foundation from the Australian Garden History Society. These funds have been used to employ a young researcher to create digital maps of the entire study area, complete with major geographic features showing the siting of homesteads. Using the expertise of cartographers and the wonderful resource of aerial mapping and photography, we are interpreting and visualising the landscape in its transitional stages from Aboriginal settlement to pastoral settlement. Homestead portraits by Eugene von Guérard, Thomas Clark, Nicholas Chevalier, Louis Buvelot, and William Tibbits are also proving invaluable sources of information.

We plan to publish the results of our research in 2014 in a book comprising a catalogue of homesteads, case studies of selected properties, discursive essays, maps, plans, and an index of architects and landscape designers. Other outcomes will include web-based content available through the RMIT and AGHS websites, an exhibition, talks, and tours.



## Mission Statement

The Australian Garden History Society is the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.